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## Wausau and Stevens Point Area Child Care Providers Awarded Program Improvement Grants

**Wausau** – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman presented grants to local child care agencies for enhancements to their programs at the YWCA Child Development Center in Wausau today. Child care providers submitted applications for funds to assist with improvements to their programs through enhanced parent outreach, staff training, and/or additional materials for the center. Secretary Gassman congratulated the 33 child care agencies statewide for working to improve the quality of their programs and for fostering an atmosphere for greater parent involvement.

"I congratulate these child care agencies for their focus on children and families and how important a nurturing environment is for the children. The quality of care and learning opportunities that our children receive is directly related to their development and ability to do well in school," Secretary Gassman said. "Study after study tells us that the investments we make in the early years last a lifetime."

A total of \$35,000 is being awarded statewide as part of the Governor's "*Strengthening Families*" initiative to improve the quality of the state's child care programs and get Wisconsin children and families off to the right start.

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services with DWD, the Department of Public Instruction and other partners in the "*Strengthening Families*" initiative which is focused on supporting the efforts of child care providers to strengthen families and help prevent abuse and neglect through their daily contact with parents and children. The initiative emphasizes Governor Doyle's "**Kids First**" agenda to strengthen early childhood in Wisconsin.

"Early child care workers are in a unique position to provide families with parenting advice and serve as an early warning and response system for vulnerable children," said Department of Health and Family Services Secretary Helene Nelson. "The Department is pleased to be part of this statewide initiative to identify promising approaches to strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment."

Other partners in the Governor's "*Strengthening Families*" initiative include the Children's Trust Fund, the Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Fund, the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network and child care advocates across the state.

The grants are being awarded during National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Governor Jim Doyle has proclaimed April 2006 as National Child Abuse Prevention Month and April 30 as "Celebrate Children's Day" in Wisconsin. The goal is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families to prevent child abuse.

One hundred twenty-two child care agencies submitted proposals for the grants. The Wausau and Stevens Point agencies that received the grants are as follows:

Agency Name	City	County	Amount
Community Child Care Center, Inc.	Stevens Point	Portage	\$1000
Noel Learning Center	Stevens Point	Portage	\$1000
Wausau Child Care Center	Wausau	Marathon	\$1000
Woodson YMCA Child Development Center	Wausau	Marathon	\$500
YWCA Child Development Center	Wausau	Marathon	\$1000

Funding for the grants is provided by the CAP Fund of the Children's Hospital and Health System in Milwaukee and the Children's Trust Fund.